

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR VT XF

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN CALLS AT VATICAN

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

REF: ROME 1143, ROME 1266 (BOTH FEB. 1973)

1. A NUMBER OF ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS THIS WEEK HAVE BELATEDLY REPORTED ON A DEC. 14 MEETING BETWEEN AN OFFICIAL OF THE VATICAN "FOREIGN OFFICE" AND YOUSSEF KHASKO, AN ALLEGED "PLO REPRESENTATIVE". KHASKO, A 47-YEAR-OLD CATHOLIC PALESTINIAN REFUGEE WHO WORKS AS A COMPOSER AND ORCHESTRA LEADER, ALSO GAVE AN INTERVIEW WHICH APPEARED IN JAN. 9 "LA NAZIONE" OF FLORENCE. IN INTERVIEW KHASKO SAYS HE SPOKE TO VATICAN OFFICIAL ABOUT JERUSALEM AND PALESTINE. POINTS STRESSED IN INTERVIEW WERE GENERALLY MODERATE IN TONE AND SEEMINGLY NOT AUTHORITATIVE PLO VIEWS. HE CLAIMED THAT PALESTINIANS DO NOT IGNORE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL AND THAT NO PALESTINIAN HAS SPOKEN OF CREATION OF NEW STATE. WHEN HE LEFT JERUSALEM, KHASKO SAID THAT PLO WAS DIS-

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CUSSING VARIOUS PROPOSALS. HE STATED, "I DON'T BELIEVE IN POSSI-

BILITY OF A NEW STATE. I BELIEVE IN A DEMOCRATIC PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT OF JEWS, MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS." KHASKO REPORTED THAT VATICAN CONFIRMED TO HIM THAT IT DID NOT ACCEPT ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF JERUSALEM AND THAT POPE PAUL HAD ALWAYS SUPPORTED THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLES AND FOUGHT FOR HOLY PLACES. BEFORE HIS VISIT, PALESTINIANS WERE UNINFORMED ABOUT HOLY SEE'S VIEWS, KHASKO SAID, AND ON HIS RETURN TO BEIRUT HE WILL NOW TRY TO CONVINCE HIS COLLEAGUES TO SET UP AN OFFICIAL INFORMATION CHANNEL WITH HOLY SEE VIA PAPAL Nuncios IN ARAB COUNTRIES. KHASKO DENIED ANY PLO INVOLVEMENT IN PALESTINIAN TERRORISM. HE ATTRIBUTED IT TO EXTREMIST GROUPS ATTEMPTING TO REMIND WORLD OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S PLIGHT.

2. VATICAN SPOKESMAN ALLESSANDRINI TOLD PRESS JAN. 9 THAT A PERSON NAMED KHASKO HAD BEEN RECEIVED IN VATICAN BUT ONLY "FOR PRIVATE REASONS" AND NOT AS REPRESENTATIVE OF PLO.

3. RESPONSIBLE VATICAN SOURCE CONFIRMED TO US DEC. 10 THAT KHASKO HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY FUNCTIONARY OF SECRETARIAT OF STATE. SOURCE NOTED THAT KHASKO, WHO NORMALLY RESIDENT IN ROME, SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS PERSON WHOSE MAIN INTEREST WAS MUSIC, AND THAT HE WAS RECEIVED ON PURELY PERSONAL BASIS. KHASKO GAVE NO INDICATION THAT HE CONSIDERED HIMSELF A PLO REPRESENTATIVE.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH IT PROBABLY TRUE THAT KHASKO NOT RECEIVED AS PLO REPRESENTATIVE, IT NEVERTHELESS SEEMS TO US STRANGE FOR PRIVATE PERSON TO BE RECEIVED AT ANY LEVEL IN VATICAN FOREIGN OFFICE. SUCH PERSONS ARE NORMALLY RECEIVED BY PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE WHICH HAS OPEN DOOR POLICY. IT IS NOT EXCLUDABLE THAT VATICAN, BY RECEIVING SOMEONE AS INNOCUOUS AS KHASKO, HOPED TO GAIN CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CREDIT IN EYES OF PALESTINIANS WITHOUT PAYING VERY HIGH PRICE. VOLPE

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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